Friday strikes twice as Wanderers leave it too late

One of Wycombe's closest efforts in the first half against Reading. Alan Phillips thunders in a drive that finished just wide in the 16th minute

DEATH SAVED US—HURLEY

CHARLIE HURLEY (Reading manager): "I didn't really want to play because of the pitch which was hardly conducive to good football. I thought Wycombe did really well in the second half but I was pleased with my lads in the first.

"I've got to admit I was worried in the last few minutes and that stop by Death from Pearson saved us. He's a great 'keeper who could be playing First Division football if he was a bit taller.

"I was impressed by Pearson. The conditions suited him and he was always dangerous."

TED POWELL (Wycombe manager): "I thought we were the better side on the day, especially in the second half. But we made a couple of mistakes and paid the price.

"I thought Reading were a poor side and the conditions brought us down to their level. That early goal upset our rhythm but I told the team at half time that we could win it. We certainly did better in the second half but it is so difficult to pull back two goals. I felt sorry for the lads.

"It sounds like sour grapes to blame the pitch for our defeat but the referee decided to play and that was that. I think I would have wanted to play on Saturday anyway."

IAN PEARSON (Wycombe goalscorer): "I was convinced that shot in the last seconds had gone in but the 'keeper stuck out a hand and pushed it onto a post. It looked a goal all the way."

WYCOMBE DEFIED IN LAST MINUTE

Above: Reading full back Gary Peters thumps the ball away under pressure from John Priestley while Gavin Fraser looks on. Below: Alan Phillips powers a header towards the Reading net.

Wycombe W. 1, Reading 2

REPORT BY STUART EARP

IT took Wycombe Wanderers an hour to get going in Saturday's F.A. Cup second round tie, by which time Third Division Reading were 2-0 up.

But then the Blues showed us just why they are feared throughout F.A. Cup football with a marvellous comeback that brought them to the very edge of a draw and a replay at Elm Park.

Ian Pearson, the striker watched by Reading earlier this season, pulled a goal back after 68 minutes and frozen Loakes Park erupted. Reading withstood wave after wave of Wycombe attacks .... Howard Kennedy sent in three shots that might have brought the equaliser but as the match passed the 90 minute mark, goalkeeper Steve Death made the most important save of the game.

A brilliant moved set up the chance for Pearson from six yards and the striker thumped in a shot that seemed a certain equaliser. But Death, the smallest goalkeeper in the Football League, instinctively stuck out his hand and deflected the drive against an upright. Reading had survived.

Wanderers must be ruefully reflecting on the number of chances they accumulated in the game but they must know that they left things too late. You can't afford to give professionals a two goal start as the Blues learnt to their cost. Nevertheless Wanderers should take a bow for the standard of football they produced in the second half which was some of their best this season.

It may sound like sour grapes but this game should never have been played. I walked over the pitch before the game and it was as solid as a rock even though the sun had been on half of it. F.I.F.A. referee John Homewood consulted Reading manager Charlie Hurley and Wycombe assistant boss John Reardon before the game and it was eventually decided play was possible, although Hurley was not totally in favour of playing.

The pitch was, of course, the same for both sides but for such an important game as this, I feel the teams should have had the benefit of more normal conditions.

As it was, the players did their best on the frozen surface but inevitably there were mistakes which cost Wycombe dearly.

Blues boss Ted Powell gambled in his team selection by bringing in Gavin Fraser to midfield. Gavin has only played a few games this season due to his ties with Borough Road College and his inclusion meant that Tony Horseman was made substitute while John Priestley, a midfield player, moved into the front line.

Powell's move was understandable as Reading had not seen Fraser perform before and the player has enough ability to justify a regular place in the side. Unfortunately it robbed Wycombe of a player who would have been more at home than most on the icy surface. Horseman may be reaching the end of his career but he still possesses unique balance and has that happy knack of scoring goals. We shall never know, but it could have been different if 'Bodger' had been in the side.

Several youths were thrown out of the ground after fighting in the crowd before the game but thankfully the violence subsided after the kick-off.

Wanderers seemed nervous at first as both sides tried to adapt to the surface. The match was only five minutes old when Friday cashed in on some hesitancy in the home defence. Paul Bennett sent in a deep free kick into the box where John Murray flicked the ball on. It bounced awkwardly but no-one was quick enough to clear the danger and Friday pounced to drive the ball into the roof of the net. Some felt the Reading forward had handled in controlling the ball but referee Homewood was unsighted.

The early goal had a marked effect on Wycombe's play and they were never able to get into their stride for the rest of the half. Reading looked comfortable and composed although the match was constantly interrupted by Mr Homewood's whistle. He produced the yellow card for Friday only two minutes after the opening goal for a foul on Mick Holifield.

Wycombe produced some isolated attacks and Alan Phillips went close to repeating his feat of last year when he scored Hendon's only goal against Reading. This time Alan drove Bennett's clearance inches past the upright.

DISASTER

It was another 14 minutes before the Blues could carve out another chance when Fraser sent a 25 yard effort over the top. Then disaster struck again two minutes later.

Murray crossed hard and low from the right, inside the box. Maskell slipped as he went to save and could only get a hand to the ball. It rolled across goal to Phillips who found himself facing his own net with the ball only inches from the line. A clearance would have been dangerous and the centre half tried to play the ball away but Friday again saw his chance and rushed in to slam the ball home. Maskell would have gobbled up that cross in normal conditions.

Wanderers replied with two corners but by now Reading were full of confidence and soaked up anything Wycombe could throw at them. Just before half time though, Priestley drove a shot inches past the post when a goal could have given the Blues the vital boost they needed before the break.

The same pattern continued in the second half with Wanderers having the greater percentage of play but seldom troubling the track-suited Death. Gradually the midfield trio began to create openings with Kennedy leading the way. Howard has had his critics this season but he won't play a finer game and his hard work almost swung the game Wycombe's way.

It was Kennedy who sliced a first time shot wide in the 65th minute but two minutes later Pearson set the near 8,000 crowd alight. The ball was played out of Reading's defence to Bob Davies. Reading pushed out, hoping to catch Wanderers off side but Davies' chip was chested down by Kennedy and Pearson took his chance first time and rammed the ball past the rooted goalkeeper from 18 yards.

Friday could have sewn the game up a minute later when clean through but Maskell saved his shot at the second attempt.

JUST WIDE

With the crowd firmly behind them, Wanderers powered forward in search of more goals. Mick Holifield broke clear on the left and crossed to the unmarked Pearson but his far post header flew just wide. Then Kennedy fired in a shot straight at Death which would have been a goal a yard either side of the 'keeper.

Kennedy sent Death diving full length after good work by Fraser in the 82nd minute and three minutes later a lovely move ended with Kennedy firing inches past an upright with Death again transfixed to his spot.

Reading were well and truly on the rack as Wycombe surged forward ceaselessly in the closing stages. Pearson flicked a pass to Phillips who lost his balance and sent the ball high into the crowd and then came the dramatic incident with only 20 seconds left.

Phillips set the ball up on the six yard line and Pearson looked certain to score from close range. The shot was good but Death got his fingertips to the ball, enough to deflect it onto the right hand upright. No-one could pick up the rebound which Reading cleared and 15 seconds later the referee brought the game to a close.

With a little more luck Wanderers would have been playing again tomorrow at Elm Park, probably on a proper surface. They were only inches away from a replay which prompted this apt remark from Reading's manager: "Someone up there loves me," said Hurley after the game. Someone up there didn't show much affection for Wycombe on Saturday.

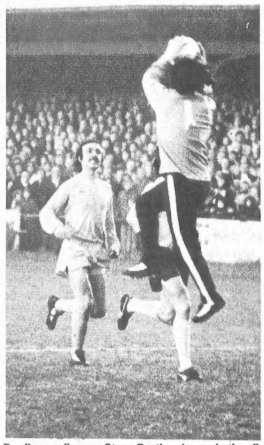
WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies; H. Kennedy, G. Fraser, M. Holifield; I. Pearson, D. Evans, J. Priestley. Sub A. Horseman (not used).

READING: S. Death; G. Peters, D. Moreline, P. Bennett, S. Henderson; J. Murray, B. Stuckey, B. Carnaby; J. Murray, R. Hiron, R. Friday. Sub M. Hollis (not used).

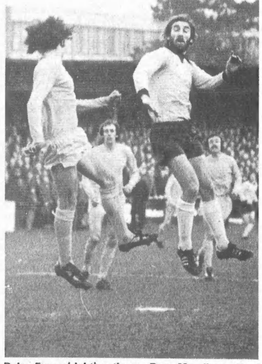
Half-time: 0-2. **Goalscorers, Reading** — Friday 2 (5, 32). **Wycombe** — Pearson (68).

Referee: J. Homewood (Sunbury).

Attendance: 7,700.



Reading goalkeeper Steve Death, who made the all important last minute save from Ian Pearson, takes this cross safely.



Dylan Evans (right) outjumps Dave Moreline to head the ball on in the first half.

THE BLUES' SECOND HALF GOAL

Wycombe's goal in a murky second half on its way from the left foot of Ian Pearson after 68 minutes. Only a great save robbed Pearson of an equaliser in the last minute of the game.

More F.A. Cup news and pictures on page 17

STOP PRESS

DRIVING CHARGE

Michael Hawes of 3 Jubilee Road, Downley, appeared before Wycombe Magistrates on Monday charged with causing bodily harm to a man by wanton or furious driving on Saturday. He was also charged with driving in a dangerous manner on Suffield Road, High Wycombe, on that day and also of driving without due care and attention and failing to stop when requested to do so by a police officer. Case adjourned until January 12 and Hawes bailed for £100 with surety of £100.

GIFTS GALORE!

DRESSING TABLE SETS
MIRRORS
EXTENSIVE SELECTION OF FRENCH PERFUMES
LARGE RANGE OF GIFT SETS (by most leading brands)
CAMERAS
PROJECTORS
TAPE RECORDERS
TELEVISIONS
HI-FI EQUIPMENT
EDITORS, SLIDE VIEWERS,
TELESCOPES
MICROSCOPES
FLASH GUNS
BINOCULARS
TORCHES
SODA SYPHONS

MOST LEADING BRANDS OF TOILETRIES
SHAVING BRUSHES
RAZORS, HAIR BRUSHES
ELECTRIC IRONS
FOOD MIXERS
COFFEE GRINDERS
ELECTRIC KNIVES
ELECTRIC TOASTERS
ELECTRIC BLANKETS
ELECTRIC MASSAGES
HEALTH LAMPS
ELECTRIC RAZORS
HAIR DRYERS
ELECTRIC CURLERS
ELECTRIC TOOTH BRUSHES

(Proprietor: Seymour (Chemist) Ltd.)
7 HIGH STREET, HIGH WYCOMBE
Tel. 30138
Open all day Wednesday
Hughes
Photographic, Hi-Fi, Colour TV Specialists

S. C. WILLOTT
for
CHRISTMAS GIFTS

LEATHER GOODS
Handbags
Jewel Cases
Wallets
Writing Cases
Travel Bags
Dressing Cases
Brief Cases

MEN'S WEAR
Scarves
Ties
Silk Squares
Handkerchiefs
Gloves
Dressing Gowns
Knitwear

Evening Bags — Manicure Sets
Seat Sticks — Travelling Rugs
Umbrellas

17/19 CRENDON STREET
HIGH WYCOMBE

Printed and published by the Bucks Free Press, Gomm Road, High Wycombe. Tel. High Wycombe 21212. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.